

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 SNM-02 IO-13
/097 W

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R 110929Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3151
INFO CINCPAC
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL MANDALAY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
DEA BANGKOK
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 0693

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, EAIR, SWEL, CB, IN, NP, CS, BM
SUBJ: JOINT WEEKA #9, MARCH 4 - 11

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1. IENG SARY VISITS (CONF)
KAMPUCHEA DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN

AFFAIRS IENG SARY IS VISITING BURMA MARCH 7-14 , HIS FIRST OFFICIAL BILATERAL VISIT TO ANY COUNTRY. HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN HIS EXPRESSION OF KAMPUCHEA'S WILLINGNESS TO HAVE CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES BUT REFUSAL TO JOIN "ANY ALLIANCE OR ANY REGIONAL ASSOCIATION;" AND HIS CLAIM THAT KAMPUCHEA HAS "SOLVED THE PROBLEM OF FOOD," AND HAS SOME SURPLUS FROM THIS YEAR'S RICE HARVEST.

A RANKING BURMESE MOFA OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT BURMESE-KHMER RELATIONS HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY GOOD BECAUSE OF MUTUAL DIFFICULTIES WITH THAILAND, AND THAT DELEGATIONS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY CLOSE AT RECENT INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS, SO IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT BURMA IS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO RECEIVE A BILATERAL VISIT FROM IENG SARY. IN PRIVATE MEETINGS, SHE SAID, SARY HAS EXPRESSED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF A REGIONAL ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY, BUT INSISTS THAT IT MUST NOT BE SPONSORED BY ASEAN AND THAT THE WORD "INDEPENDENCE" BE SUBSTITUTED FOR "FREEDOM." THE KAMPUCHEANS HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR INTENTION OF OPENING AN EMBASSY IN RANGOON, BUT CANNOT YET DO SO BECAUSE OF THEIR LACK OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL AND THEIR DIFFICULTY IN PROVIDING FACILITIES FOR ADDITIONAL EMBASSIES IN PHNOM PENH. SHE SAID THAT SARY WILL VISIT PAKISTAN AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT HERE AND MAY ALSO VISIT KUALA LUMPUR.

WE SEE LITTLE SUBSTANCE IN THE VISIT OTHER THAN ITS
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GOODWILL ASPECTS.

(SEPTTEL ON VISIT FOLLOWS.)

2. INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY VISITS (LOU)

INDIA'S FOREIGN SECRETARY SHRI J.S. MEHTA VISITED RANGOON MARCH 8-9, AND CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER U HLA PHONE.

COMMENT: MEHTA WAS GREATLY OVERSHADOWED BY IENG SARY IN THE BURMESE PRESS. ACCORDING TO INDIAN EMBASSY SOURCES, HIS VISIT WAS ROUTINE, AND NOTHING OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE WAS DISCUSSED.

3. RELATIONS ESTABLISHED WITH COSTA RICA (UNCL)

IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT BURMA AND COSTA RICA HAVE ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AT THE EMBASSY LEVEL AS OF MARCH 8.

COMMENT: ACCORDING TO A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, THIS MOVE WAS UNDERTAKEN AT COSTA RICA'S INITIATIVE. THE GUB'S AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. WILL PROBABLY BE DESIGNATED CONCURRENTLY AS AMBASSADOR TO COSTA RICA.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO FATHOM WHAT SUBSTANCE THERE MIGHT EVER BE TO THIS RELATIONSHIP.

4. NEPAL AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS (UNCL)
SHARDUL S. RANA, THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF NEPAL, PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT NE WIN MARCH 7.

5. STUDENTS ARRESTED; CAMPUS DISTURBANCES POSSIBLE (CONF)
A UNIVERSITY STUDENT ARTIST AND A STUDENT POET HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BECAUSE OF A CRYPTO-SEDITION MATTER IN THE RANGOON UNIVERSITY STUDENT ANNUAL, AND THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS OF OTHER UNIVERSITY ARRESTS AT MANDALAY.
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THERE IS A SOMEWHAT LESS THAN 50-50 POSSIBILITY OF CAMPUS DISTURBANCES WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. (SEE RANGOON 685.)

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6. MORE HELICOPTERS FOR BURMA (LOU)
A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SIKORSKY AIRCRAFT DIVISION OF UNITED TECHNOLOGIES IS IN RANGOON FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS REGARDING A BARTER ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY THE BURMA AIR FORCE WOULD PROVIDE TEAK, HARDWOODS AND/OR GEMS IN EXCHANGE FOR THREE HELICOPTERS. HE IS OPTIMISTIC THAT AN AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED. GUB AIR FORCE OFFICERS CONFIRMED TO HIM THAT BURMA CONTRACTED TO PURCHASE THREE PUMA HELICOPTERS FROM FRANCE IN MID-1976 AND DELIVERY IS EXPECTED WITHIN ABOUT
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FOUR MONTHS. THE FRENCH OFFERED VERY FAVORABLE FINANCING TERMS, BUT ACCORDING TO THE SIKORSKY REPRESENTATIVE, AIR FORCE OFFICERS SAID THE BURMA AIR FORCE DID NOT WANT THESE AIRCRAFT AS THEY WERE EXPENSIVE AND DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. HENCE, THE HELICOPTERS ARE BEING PURCHASED BY THE BURMA AIRWAYS CORPORATION (BAC). AN EMBASSY OFFICER QUERIED THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF BAC REGARDING THESE AIRCRAFT AND THE DIRECTOR CONFIRMED THAT BAC IS PURCHASING THE PUMAS. HOWEVER, HE CLAIMED THAT BAC DOES NOT WANT THEM; DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM; AND DOES NOT HAVE PILOTS TO OPERATE THEM. HE SAID ORDERS "CAME DOWN FROM ABOVE" TO PURCHASE THE AIRCRAFT.

COMMENT: IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE GUB ORIGINALLY WANTED THE PUMAS TO SERVICE OFFSHORE DRILLING RIGS. THE GUB PROBABLY PLANNED TO FORCE FOREIGN OIL EXPLORATION FIRMS INTO AGREEING TO CONTRACT FOR THIS SERVICE, BUT OFFSHORE DRILLING HAS CEASED AND THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE USE FOR THE AIRCRAFT. HENCE, THERE MAY BE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT WITHIN THE GUB TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISION TO PURCHASE THE AIRCRAFT. THE SIKORSKY REPRESENTATIVE SAID THAT A RUMOR WITHIN TRADE CIRCLES CONTENTS THAT THE FRENCH PAID A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF "TEA MONEY" TO SOMEONE IN THE GUB TO CLINCH THE DEAL, AND THIS MAY HAVE PROMPTED THE PURCHASE, AS IT WAS CLEAR BY THE TIME THE CONTRACT WAS SIGNED THAT OFFSHORE OPERATIONS WERE WINDING DOWN.

7. TOURIST TRADE SHOWS CONSTRAINED GROWTH (LOU)
DURING 1976 A RECORD 18,900 TOURISTS VISITED BURMA,
AND BURMA'S EARNINGS FROM THE TOURIST INDUSTRY REACHED
NEARLY \$3MI MILLION. HOWEVER, LACK OF HOTEL FACILITIES
AND DOMESTIC TRANSPORT CONTINUE TO CONSTRAIN BURMA'S
TOURIST INDUSTRY. ALTHOUGH THEY RECOGNIZE THERE IS A
VAST POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS
FROM TOURISM, GUB HOTEL AND TOURIST COPORATION OFFICIALS
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SAID THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATE PLANS TO EXPAND HOTEL FACIL-
ITIES NOR WILL THE GUB PERMIT THEM TO ENTER INTO A
MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH A FOREIGN HOTEL CHAIN.

8. CIVIL AVIATION NOTES (UNCL)
BURMA SIGNED AN AIR AGREEMENT WITH POLAND THIS WEEK,
BUT FLIGHTS FROM WARSAW TO RANGOON ARE NOT EXPECTED SOON.
IN A SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, BAC EXPECTS TO RECEIVE FOUR
MORE DE HAVILAND TWIN OTTERS AND ONE ADDITIONAL FOKKER
F-27 IN JUNE OR JULY 1977.

9. FIVE DIE IN PLAGUE OUTBREAK (LOU)
FIVE PERSONS ARE REPORTED DEAD IN AN OUTBREAK OF BUBONIC
PLAGUE AT HLEGU, ABOUT 20 MILES NORTH OF RANGOON. THIS
OCCURRENCE ALARMED THE GUB MORE THAN PREVIOUS PLAGUE OUT-
BREAKS, SINCE IT WAS CLOSE TO THE SITE OF THE THIRD PARTY
CONGRESS. NO DELEGATES ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN INFECTED,
BUT THE FLAREUP IN HLEGU IS STILL NOT UNDER CONTROL AFTER
TWO WEEKS OF SPRAYING AND INOCULATIONS. THIS SUGGESTS
THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THESE CASES MAY BE PNEUMONIC (HUMAN
SPREAD) RATHER THAN BUBONIC (FLEA SPREAD) PLAGUE.
OSBORN

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